

To increase citizen participation in public debate, the FCC must require local broadcasters to air public commentary on local political campaigns and issues -- daily -- during primetime hours. Surely their advertising revenues can cover such reporting, in the forms of panels, expert testimony, and literal debates. Cable customers shouldn't be the only people to receive such broadcasts. In fact, the FCC could institute a program called "Food for Thought" stamps, issuing vouchers to all U.S. citizens living under the poverty level. These citizens could either use the vouchers to support non-commercial radio, purchase a newspaper subscription, or purchase cable TV services. A novel approach, to be sure, though I would much rather see commercial broadcasters foot the bill of public service television networks when the digital spectrum is split, creating six stations each for the major broadcasters. I consider Commissioner Copps to be a heroic figure in these efforts, seeking out public commentary, pointing out inadequacies in FCC rules, and raising important topics where change is possible, such as broadcasters' obligatory use of increased stations. The fact the Commissioner Powell can't be bothered to show up at these hearings shows his disregard for the public. He represents the small cadre of media insiders with vested interests rather than the people, and it urks me to pay his salary and the salaries of the 2,000 employees at the FCC under his leadership. Why should I have to listen to weeks and weeks of pledge drives on my favorite radio stations when they could be subsidized by a public trust fund? The free market has a vested interest in the outcome of elections and, therefore, cannot be trusted to air issues that doesn't serve its interests. Putting Americans to sleep with consumer-news drivel and disempowering us with regard to critical public issues, such as the environment and war, just to name two, is a planned strategy to protect the military-industrial complex. I expect more from broadcasters and journalists, and the FCC has a role in motivating better broadcasting for the public.